

Maps and Mandalas, Division and Multiplication

Media and Global Divides

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Abstract

In this plenary talk delivered to the IAMCR conference on “Global Divides” in Stockholm, July 2008, I explore a range of issues triggered by the very phrase “global divides”. I ask whether the world is divided and, if so, by what criteria. I explore the opposites of division through cohesion and multiplication and borrow Rosenau’s term to argue that contradictory processes of “framgregation” are evident. I present some conundrums around contemporary cultural practices, including a consumerist desire for other’s peoples authentic culture and political rhetoric that exacerbates division. I conclude by suggesting that inequality remains the most significant division, even if not simply evident along a North-South axis, and wonder if the economic downturn that was starting to show would produce a new politics, including a better understanding of endemic poverty.

I have added marginal notes in the text to take account of both the subsequent election of President Obama and the deteriorating economic environment, but the text remains a viewpoint of its moment of delivery.

Keywords: media, globalization, maps, division, space, inequality

Giving a plenary talk is always a challenge. There’s an expectation both of new content and of some performance. I experience a demand to think differently and that’s hard. Last week, while I was fighting an infestation of moths busily eating away at a Persian rug, I pondered on my lack of control over ordinary life compared with the hubris of academic conceptual and linguistic control of the entire world. How easily we invoke the ‘global’, how hard to control one’s local life.

Instead of some recycled talk on some aspects of my own research, and since it was bothering me, I’ve decided to try to unpack and think through the very terms of the conference title: *Media and Global Divides*.

Media

“Media” is a continually shifting and currently expanding object of study. Is it clear any longer what our focus, our object of study is?

There is the Internet with its range of content and uses, including the impact new on-line practices are having on older forms of mediation, citizen journalism being but one example.

There is the take up of mobile telephony not simply for point-to-point communication but for banking, SMS and content delivery. Mobile telephony is probably the fastest diffusing technology that humans have known (or since we started measuring such things). It took only 26 years from none to over 3.3 billion phones worldwide, with an estimate of 4 billion by 2010.

There is the growth of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace with their possibilities of not only narcissistic over-exposure but also of political mobilization.

There is the growth of YouTube as the place to exhibit creative new video content, accessible to anyone who cares to find it, that can launch musical and artistic careers. I very much like the wonderful US-centric website *Brave New Films* by Robert Greenwald with its “pssst, do something” motto and brilliant out-takes of Fox television. Bricolage and mash-up are the new forms.

All of this means that not only are “old”, or more precisely “analog”, media challenged by “new” “digital” media. It also means that the “new” themselves keep evolving and changing practices. It is impossible to theorise all of this together in a single framework, other than to make banal comments about complexity and multiplicity of channels. Neither extreme position in the stand-off between new media being nothing more than “silicone snake oil” or being the harbinger of freedoms we have never yet known could possibly be correct.

Furthermore, the impact of such changes on “old” media is felt differently and responded to in different ways around the world. The US press environment is clearly under desperate pressure as readers disappear and advertising revenue plummets. In Iran, much serious journalism now occurs on the web, not on paper. In Britain, the distribution of BBC-i-player, that allows for the downloading of current BBC programmes, accounts for about 5% of all broadband traffic and is blamed for slowing the entire broadband network down for everyone.

While the politics of access to such new communications technologies remains important, with geography, class and gender major determinants of access and use, the emerging political issues are more about de-accessibility. The old media were characterized by scarcity, in the technology of magnetic tape and in the limitations of ownership and control. But the new media are characterized both by massive file-sharing but also growing blockages to such sharing. That is, issues around copyright, free access, encryption, digital rights management, firewalling, DOA attacks, are emerging as the sites of political contestation in an era where image, sound and text can be so easily duplicated and reproduced.

Context Matters

In some countries, people are pushing for greater communicative and media freedoms than they have had before while, in other places, people are experiencing encroachments on the freedoms they once enjoyed. If anything, we need to be more specific, more contextualised, more analytic and probably more comparative in our research on such issues. Reading one context against another should help to understand each better. Structural pressures and changes, different models of ownership and control, questions of access and de-access still matter and produce different outcomes within national frameworks. The establishment of region-specific journals – on the Middle East, on China, on Africa – are to be welcomed. We might wish to support more working groups on different regions within IAMCR in order to support this trend.

But my easy return to and invocation of regional and national experiences pushes me toward the second term of the conference title.

Global

The “Global”. What is it? Whose is it? When is it?

At least three kinds of meanings attend the notion of the “global” and the way the term is used. Academic discourses variously talk of the global as a new space of interaction, made possibly most obviously through the internet. There is also a gesture toward something beyond and bigger than the national, sometimes seen as a totalising set of national, regional and transnational actors. And sometimes the “global” is used as a synonym for the “universal”, the singular and shared. I’d like to acknowledge the work of Jan Ekecrantz, the well-respected academic based here in Stockholm, who was attempting to bring some linguistic order to our use of terms such as globalization, transnationalization, internationalization. But we’re not agreed, we’re not there yet.

One obvious problem with thinking about the globe is that three-dimensional space is mapped on to two. Maps are highly political images. They give us specific representations and carry the vision of the world, the values and the location from which one views the globe and the question one asks of it. The world looks very different through different maps: through the Peters projection, which gives a more accurate depiction of landmass and challenges the received image of the world through the Mercators Projection. (Image 1).

Or if the South is at the top: who said north was up? (Image 2).

Or if we shift the centrality of the Atlantic – what we in the West are used to – to make the Pacific central, (Image 3).

Or if Jerusalem is at the heart, as in medieval European maps, (Image 4).

And so on.¹

In the Borges short story, *On Rigour in Science*, he imagined an empire where the science of cartography becomes so exact that only a map on the same scale as the empire itself will suffice. When the empire decayed, the map was all that remained. For Baudrillard, it is the map – the simulation of reality – that people live in while it is reality that is crumbling away from disuse. Eventually, under the map we find the “desert of the real”, the key trope in Matrix films. Perhaps the risk of all maps is that they replace what they intend to map out. We may run a similar risk in media studies where, under the “global divide” metaphor, we now find only the desert of our real, a frozen metaphor that does not reflect an always changing world.

Another problem is that we’ve upped our concerns to this new, bigger level, and hence often seem to abandon more specific kinds of analysis, that is work at the national and regional levels.

Thinking about globalization has tended to set up what John Saul (2004) calls “false binaries”: between a “geographic” focus and a “social” analysis, and between “globalization” and “imperialism” or Empire with a capital E and empire with a small e, still known as imperialism.

The first binary involves the commonsense understanding about the coexistence of a wealthy North and an impoverished South that still informs some left analysis and indeed runs through some of the discourses in IAMCR. This argument is challenged from

Image 1. Peters projection, which gives a more accurate depiction of landmass

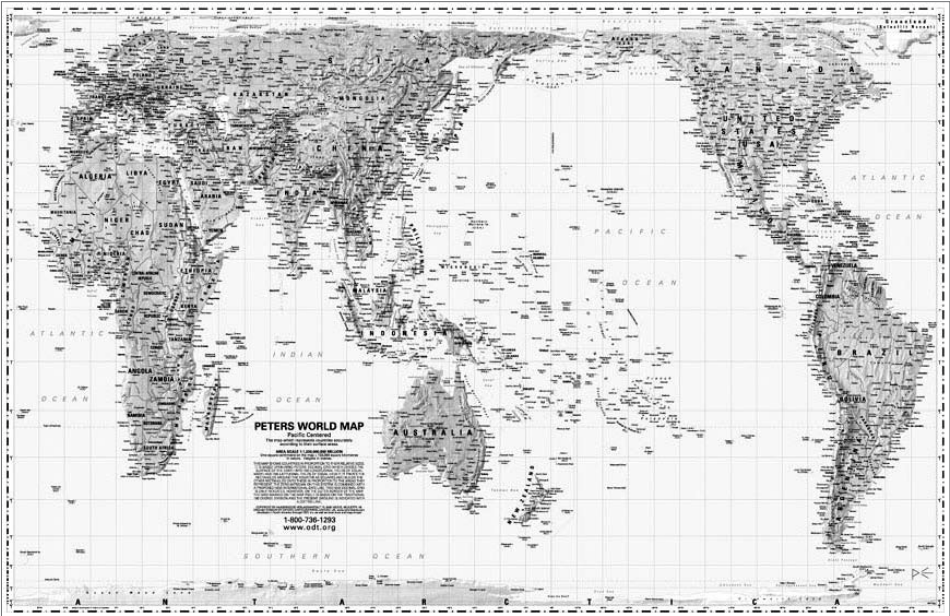


Image 2. South is at the top: who said north was up?

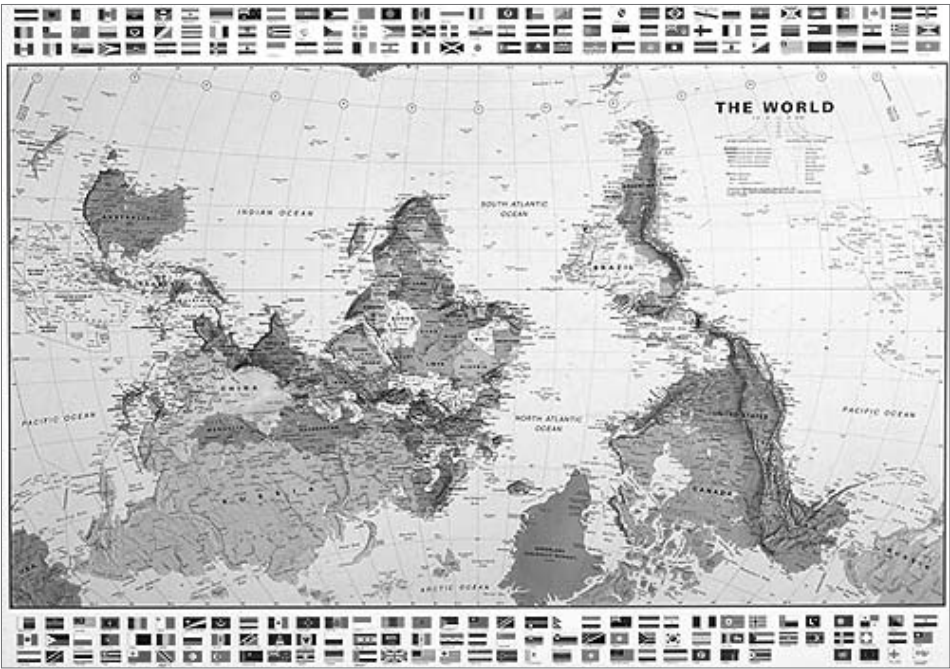
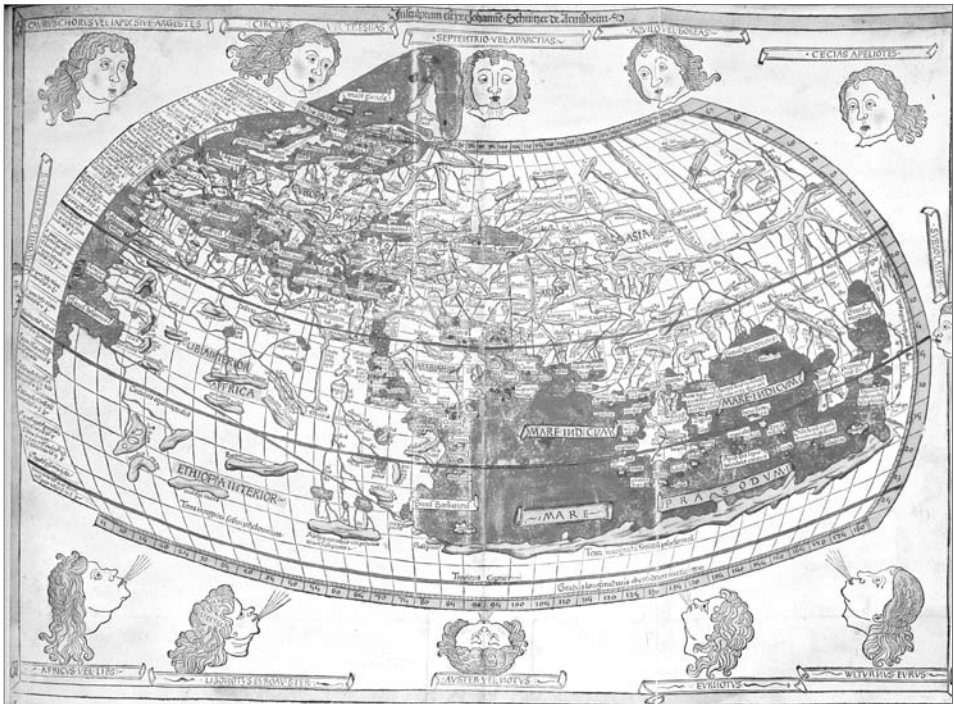


Image 3. Shifting the centrality of the Atlantic to make the Pacific central



Image 4. Jerusalem is at the heart, as in medieval European maps



two different directions. One is the evident heterogeneity of Southern economies, which includes both the emergence of the dynamic BICS four (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) as well as the world's poorest nations. The *World Wealth Report* from Merrill-Lynch/Capgemini (<http://www.us.capgemini.com/worldwealthreport08/>) published in June 2008 shows that the number of dollar millionaires around the world increased by 6% in 2007 to over 10 million people. The largest growth was in India 22.7%; China with 20.3% and Brazil at 19%, with a prediction that there will be more millionaires in China than in Britain by the end of 2008². The rapid economic development of these national economies and the production of wealth within them was *the* international story of 2008 and helped to challenge the over-easy distinction of the entire "global south" as poor. Some of the maps I've chosen show Southern improvements in economic standards using various indicators. But one of the maps shows the locations of those living on two dollars a day, where the clustering in India and Africa is self-evident. And of course, the 'global credit crunch' will make the 2009 edition of this report chastening reading, as wealth is lost everywhere, with profound implications for national development budgets and the living conditions of the world's poorest.

The other, connected, argument is the visible discrepancies of wealth and power *within* countries of both North and South. This is increasing daily as the current shudder in the rampant "casino capitalism" of sub-prime mortgage lenders and hedge-fund gamblers is piling on unemployment, repossession and debt on many in the Eur-Am zone at the same time that the consumption of ultra-luxury goods and the price of art continues unassailed³. One of the maps shows inequality within national economies around the world, with Brazil as one of the most unequal, while the recent report by UN-Habitat on the *State of the World's Cities 2008-9* says that many US cities are growing more unequal while new research shows that the UK is as unequal in 2009 as it was in the 1960s. Thus even development theorists like Hoogvelt who were once wedded to neat models of a geographically-defined core and periphery are starting to recognise a mobile and dispersed transnational capitalist class and a vast circle of less privileged people in *both* North and South.

The second binary, between Empire with a big 'E' and a small 'e', invokes the construction by Hardt and Negri (2007) of a singular global system of neo-liberal marketization that – for them – produces its own, singular, global resistance, the swarming solidarity of the global "multitude". Yet while we have witnessed the growth in importance of "global" actors like the IMF and the World Bank, we have also seen the refusal of one, or more aptly *the*, major state to abide by various "global" conventions such as Kyoto and Geneva; whether President Obama alters these stances remains to be seen⁴. We have also just witnessed Russia and China saying "nyet" to sanctions against Mugabe. Hence theorists like Petras and Panitch stress once again the significance of states as both organisers of globalization but also bulwarks against it.

If anything, the responses to the globalised financial crisis show the on-going significance of the state and its policy-making in the US, Europe and Japan, even if sometimes this feels like the little boy stopping the flood with his finger in the dyke. Again, one of the fascinating outcomes of the "global credit crunch" is the rapid return of government policy and the recognition of the negligence of and the need for state intervention and regulation. The contradiction between previous market-driven 'development-speak' and the current medicine for global financial stability could hardly be more stark. There is a strong argu-

ment for better analysis of and support for the state as an entity that can still make policy, determine priorities, resist the drive of capital. I'll say more about that in a moment.

Saul's own conclusion is that "The fact is that "Empire" (the world of capitalist globalization)" and "empire" (The world of western imperialism)" coexist: they structure, in not entirely coterminous ways, both the circumstances that produce global inequality (that is, the target of progressive activity for change) and the modalities for advancing such activity " (2008: 227) But what is important is "the avoidance of false binaries" and the need to try to link the global and the national as appropriate sites of analysis and sites of struggle. This is a significant analytic and practical challenge.

A danger seems to me is that one element is sacrificed for another. For example, in Nancy Fraser's recent work on "the transnational public sphere" (2008), she runs the risk of throwing out the Westphalian babies with the post-Westphalian bathwater, seeming to suggest that nation-states and national media systems and national public opinion/public spheres have little importance or relevance in the new "globalised" environment. Yet while significant breaches to the Westphalian system are evident – Iraq and Afghanistan being but two – we also see many current examples of where it remains intact, even against convincing moral pressures: Burma, Tibet, Sudan, Zimbabwe are all examples of the resilience of the Westphalian compact. This resilience also reinforces the argument that where intervention does occur, it has an economic basis. As proponents of intervention in Haiti once argued, no wars are fought for broccoli instead of oil. We might not always like the Westphalian compact and legitimately ask when and why it stands and when it fails, but it is clearly still there. The nation-state system still has considerable life left in it.

In regard to Fraser's argument, while it seems to be the fact that more and more communication crosses borders and that some social movements and other activities clearly communicate across borders, that does not mean that *national* media systems and national framings of issues is a thing of the past. For example, in Britain, recent OFCOM evidence about media patterns suggests a highly active minority on the net while, for most people, mainstream television continues to be the main source of information about the world. I wouldn't claim that this is the same everywhere but it does suggest that we need to slow and hold our transnationalising impulses somewhat. While media might have spread globally, we as yet have no global media. And while the internet depends on transborder extensivity, we know that access, language and degrees of freedom differ widely.

As usual, we need a "not only but also" approach to political participation and to media, exploring different spatial "levels" at the same time, recognising that people can access and act within these levels directly, not having to go through one to get to the next.

We are living through a moment, whether we like it or not, of profound restructuring as capitalism becomes increasingly global. This is, of course, in itself not a new process. I regularly read aloud a section from the *Communist Manifesto* to my students in the first week of the year and ask them to guess when it was written. Few know and almost no-one guesses that it was 1848, so contemporary does the analysis sound of the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, the extension of markets beyond nations and the threat to traditional ways of life as "all that is solid melts into air".

David Harvey, the geographer, argues that capitalism was always about a profound reordering of space and that the term "globalization" signals the immense geographi-

cal reorganization currently at work (2007: 57). He argues that this moment of change actually gives us an opportunity to “emancipate ourselves from imprisonment within a *hidden spatiality* that has had the opaque power to dominate and sometimes confuse the logic of both our thinking and our politics”. This echoes Beck’s (2005) argument about a taken-for-granted methodological nationalism that has haunted our thinking. But the point would be not simply to now move quickly to quickly and simply to a “methodological globalization”. Rather, as Harvey puts it, there is now an historic opportunity to “see the production of space as a constitutive moment within ... the dynamics of capital accumulation and class struggle”. He proffers the term “uneven geographical development” and suggests that the dynamics of capitalism produces two contradictory dynamics: the need to speed up circulation of capital but also the desire to “annihilate space through time”.

Let’s look at those arguments briefly. The need to speed up the circulation of capital has prompted its devolution from the materiality of gold bars to digital zeroes and ones, but there is also need for long-term investment. This produces contradictions around the time-horizons in which different kinds of capital functions: finance capital versus merchant, manufacturing, service and state capitals. It also creates tensions across segments of the same economy, between currency and bond markets, for example; and between landlords, land developers and speculators.

The desire to “annihilate space through time” that Marx recognised drives technological innovations that produce reductions in cost and time of movement across space. Many media academics can recite an interesting historical narrative of camels, canals, trains and cars, the post, the telegraph, broadcasting, telecoms and the web. Some innovations have pushed cost of the transfer of information close to zero. In Britain, we increasingly have communities of telecomm connectivity who talk for free, but who pay a lot to talk *beyond* their community; although prices are falling for European links and many providers offer numerous country connectivity for free. Skype, for example, throws down a challenge to the traditional pricing structures of telephony.

But the opposite tendency, of developing space in time, is also necessary. The development of physical infrastructure to facilitate and support this weightless economic activity requires space as “landed capital”, especially evident in urban infrastructures that make “the geographic landscape of capitalism more and more sclerotic over time”. The old metropoli like New York, London, Tokyo vie with newer urban centres like Rio, Hong Kong and Shanghai. While the largest global metropoli in 2007 were Tokyo, Mexico City and New York/Newark), UN-Habitat suggests that the three largest metropoli by population in 2025 will be Tokyo, Mumbai and Delhi. Tehran has electronic advertising on its streets, Cairo is full of wifi spots, Mumbai’s media is exploding.

Hence are the contradictory tendencies of wanting to move through space faster but also of building up certain pieces of physical space in urban sprawl. Such “uneven geographical development” cuts across nations and regions and produces tensions between space and place. We might engage in more comparative work around urban communicative infrastructures, the “weight” of cities versus the “lightness” of connectivity. One evident global divide is that we just reached the moment when more than half of the world’s population lives in cities, perhaps one of the most significant divides there is.

A parallel argument about our changing spatial configuration comes from James Rosenau in *International Relations*, who also talks about the contemporary epoch as

marked by profound transformations that have fostered contradictions between the globalizing and the localizing, the centralizing and the decentralizing, the integrating and the fragmenting. His neologism is “framegration”, a term which he claims “highlights the dynamics of contraction – which sustain localizing, decentralizing and fragmenting forces on the one hand – and the dynamics of expansion through which globalizing, centralizing and integrating forces unfold on the other. It fuses in a single phrase the interactive polarities that underlie the emergent epoch” (Rosenau, 2003).

So, to summarise, my concern here is that with the invitation of this conference to think about “global division”, we mustn’t assume that other kinds of spatial conceptions are now passé, of no use. Indeed, it is perhaps more vital than ever to explore how specific societies and economies are located within the net of capitalism, what state policies can be and how local/national solutions to contemporary problems are devised, and how cities and specific places function in and contribute to the broader networks of this particular “global” moment.

Divides

Let me now turn to the third term. This is both set in the plural so invites examination of a plurality, but is also set at the “global” level, as if there *is* a singularity that is divided, even if in many ways. I’ve already tried to render somewhat problematic this putative “unity” or singularity” that is now divided. Whose or which is this “world” that is divided?

The opposite of division might be cohesion. At the end of the 20th century (ah yes, I remember it well!) the language of “a new world order” was widely trumpeted, seemingly able to overcome the truly deep and threatening division of the Cold War. But that discourse was hijacked to become a US neo-con model of order, of “the end of history”, that, instead of producing cohesion, has left chaos in its wake.

But *is* the world of the 21st century *so* deeply divided? It might be more incoherent, harder to analyse, after the polarising rhetoric of the Cold War or the simple division of “three worlds” that packaged the world so neatly. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s more divided. I have tried to contest a simple notion of a global economy divided simply North-South.

There are a plethora of other ways in which we might think of “global divides”: by material issues such as military spending, (Image 5); by prevalence of people with HIV/AIDS, (Image 6); by meat consumed (Image 7); by who has a Starbucks and who doesn’t, (Image 8); some of the material indices that I have chosen to represent visually in the loop of images.

Let me look at more culturally-inflected phenomena, where media and communications come back into central focus.

There are of course invitations to see the world as “culturally” more divided, perhaps one of the most invidious being Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” (1996). This is often invoked as underpinning the struggle between the “West”, whatever that is, and “Islam”, whatever that is, that has developed since the Iranian Revolution and been boosted by 9/11 and the responses to that. Yet alternative voices argue persuasively for what is shared, held in common by the Abrahamic faiths. Many of us repeat that the fact that some merchants of terror are Muslim doesn’t make the billion followers of Moham-

Image 5. Military Spending 2002 (worldmapper.org)

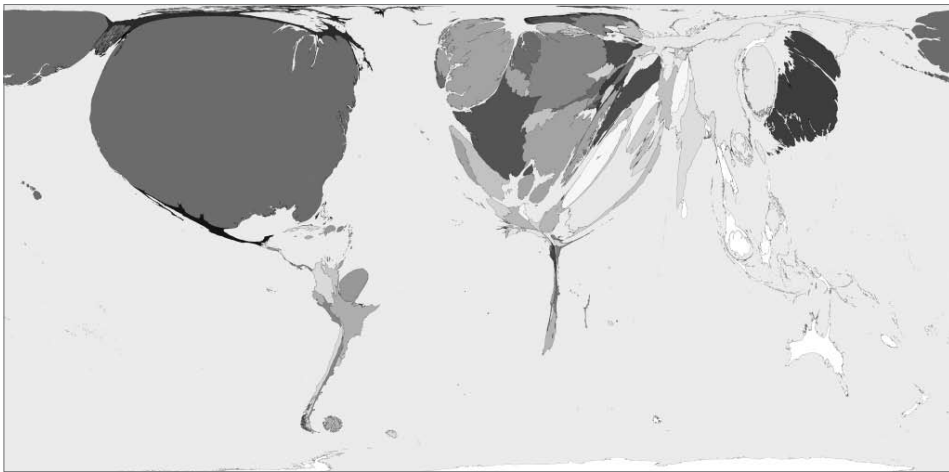
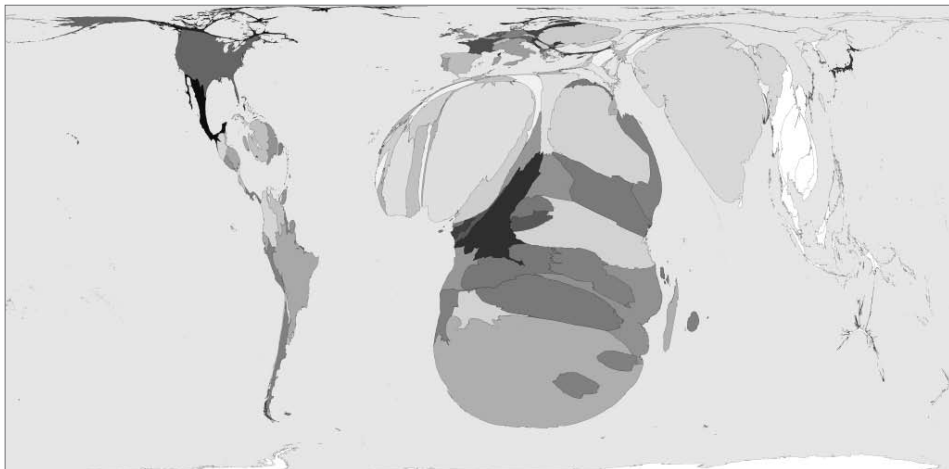


Image 6. Prevalence of People with HIV/AIDS (worldmapper.org)



mad all terrorists, despite the rhetoric of the “war on terror” and the on-going crassness of British tabloid and other European and US channels to whip up Islamophobia.⁵

It was of course Khatami, the president of Iran in the late 1990s who suggested an alternative “dialogue of civilizations”. Yet so far all overtures from Iran for direct talks with the US have been declined, and indeed at the moment the drums of war are being banged hard⁶. The power of discourse to make linguistic “facts” is readily shown by the more than two million hits on Google for “Iran’s nuclear weapons”, despite the fact that IAEA inspectors and US security officials all agree that Iran does not now have nuclear weapons. These issues are neither simply national (US-Iran), certainly not civilizational (West v Islam) and probably not global, as the rest of the world goes about its business. However, the impact of any military intervention might well become global, as the price of oil escalates and goodness knows what further military actions follow.

Image 7. Meat Consumed (worldmapper.org)

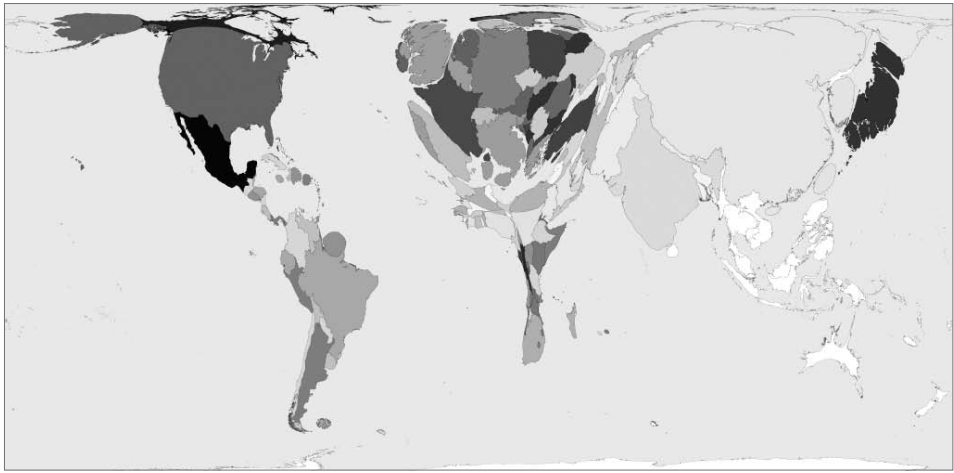
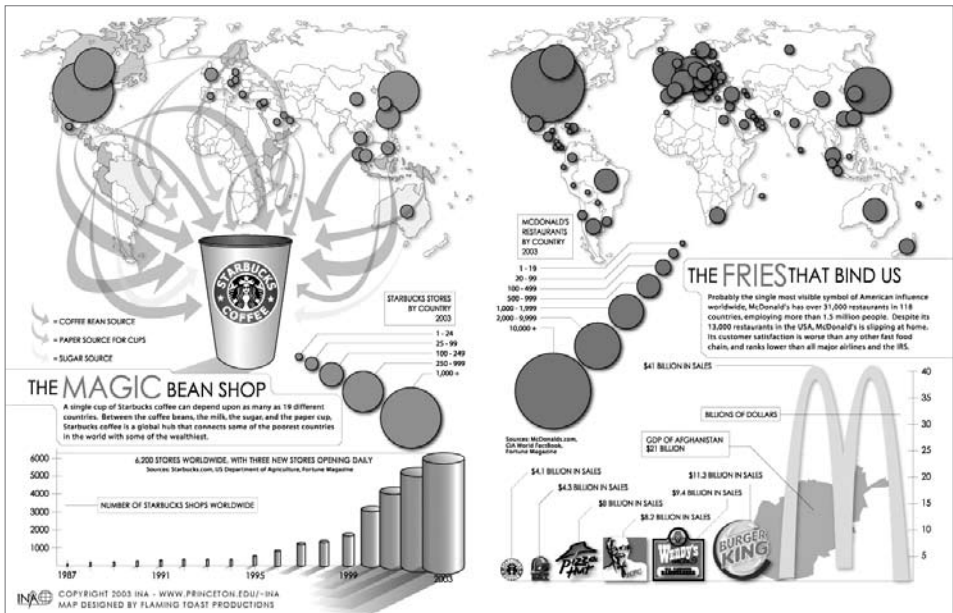


Image 8. Who Has a Starbucks and Who Doesn't



One key demand we might make of media systems is that they fully explore and articulate reasons for enmity and violence; instead of, as so many now do, acting as the mouthpieces of such values. Churchill famously quipped that “jaw-jaw was better than war-war” and a key concern of media studies must be the need for diplomacy, political communication and space for analysis of the facts.

In these kinds of arguments, division becomes elided with difference and diversity. The argument continues as to whether globalizing processes produce heterogenization or homogenization. On one hand, human history is one of cultural encounters, influences and transfers. But the scale and impact of contemporary “flows” (a poor hydraulic

metaphor for mediated cultural encounters) is unprecedented. There are many ways of arguing that this is not purely a movement toward homogeneity through market exchange. One can point to political reactions and policy regimes; for example, China allows no more than 10 Hollywood movies a year. Or one can marshal evidence about the importance of the marketing of cultural difference as a commodity (new and hybrid genre and labelling including ‘Asian radio’, ‘world music’, etc). Or one could point to autonomous demands to be different and express difference and to long-standing processes of translation and adaptation throughout history.

I recently saw the “China now” exhibition at the V and A, the Victoria and Albert Museum, itself a wonderfully resonant name. The exhibition was about the explosion of graphic design, fashion and especially architecture in China since the mid-1990s. My art historian friend was incensed by the homogenization she saw, while my photographer friend emerged saying how Chinese it all was and that in the West, we would never design in such ways. I had Appadurai’s phrase ringing in my head: “we are nostalgic for other people’s pasts”. All of this suggests to me that we need far more fine-grained analysis of aesthetic conventions, of traditions of artistic expression. It is good that members are pressing for a working group on Visual Culture in IAMCR. We might also consider the meaning of such an external desire for the “other” to always enact their otherness, whether Chinese or something else, that satisfies our need, not theirs. One might also argue that a population strong in its cultural identity is free to play with it and relax within it, rather than continually manifesting it in received forms.

Increased connectivity across boundaries doesn’t simply produce homogenization. However, expanding markets across the world means that there are hardly any places left outside and free from market influences.

Harvey uses Schumpeter’s notion of “capitalism as a gale of creative destruction” to argue that capitalism produces extreme volatility of boom and bust, or rapid growth and equally rapid shifts of production and interest to other locales. This effects the traditional heartlands of capitalism as much, if not more, than other places and brings unemployment. The collapse of old industries and thus of towns and villages – Welsh coalmining villages, the Ruhr – are obvious examples. Hence even conservative voices that have promoted globalization are acknowledging these disruptive effects: the production of helplessness and anxiety leading to the rise of a new brand of populist politicians in Europe, or the obvious contemporary dynamics of war and scarcity.

Clearly too, increased material wealth does not equate to cultural vitality. Polynesians are wealthier now than hundreds of years ago, but materialism, alcohol, western technologies and Christianity have radically altered, some would say irreparably damaged, the Polynesian sense of cultural potency. Tibet has been opened up by the Chinese and Coca-cola and tourism may prove more effective tools to erode traditional rituals and religion than decades of coercive communist intervention.

Bhutan, however, charges tourists \$200 a day to protect its identity and has no traffic lights, no physical community larger than 10,000 people. It’s poor and malnourished, but intensely Buddhist and it maintains its expressive arts. What seems important to explore in these examples is the differences between internal and external perceptions, between emic and etic outlooks: how do these changes feel to those living through them? Is it indeed “our” nostalgia for other peoples’ pasts that breeds a desire for fixity and traditional crafts as objects for external consumption? And why does so much of

our argument insist on an either-or position: can there not be ways to support emergent cultural industries that build on traditional aesthetic and musical forms and yet also appeal to contemporary tastes?

Much of the celebration of cultural diversity and extension of communicative connectivity leads to populations being better integrated into the global market. The Grameen Bank loans to Bangladeshi women allows them to buy mobile phones to rent out to others, a way of making a living through small-scale entrepreneurship. Moroccan women have developed websites that allow them to market their carpets and pottery directly to the global market, cutting out the middle-man and keeping more revenue for themselves. Diasporic groups establish media channels – radio, television, magazines – as ways both of articulating new audiences, sometimes even “communities”, but also as ways of making money and selling commodities and foodstuffs to community members. I think we need a better understanding of, even a rescuing of, the notion of petty bourgeois, renamed “petit” bourgeois, entrepreneurship. As much as Media Studies has been concerned with the power of powerful transnational media moguls, we have not thought much about small-scale media and cultural entrepreneurship, how it functions, supports creativity, who are its participants and what it means for the broader analysis of global markets.

These processes also have implications for diversity. Tyler Cowen, an American cultural economist, in a book that echoes Schumpeter called *Creative Destruction*, makes the important point that with increased cultural flows, diversity *within* a society may go up as consumers have more choice, but the diversity *across* societies goes down and they become more alike as they have more in common. Changing cityscapes reveal such a conundrum. Finding Starbucks, Pizza Hut and McDonalds in Beijing is an instance of global homogenization, but also has to be seen as one of increased choice for those within those spaces. From the advertising carried on the new Iranian satellite channels broadcasting from California into Iran, Iranians arriving in Dubai for holidays often head directly to the shops and McDonalds that are not available to them inside Iran. Further questions arise as to who consumes “diversity” and whether minorities become more and more ghettoized. Consuming diversity might be a nice urban cosmopolitan middle-class experience while poorer enclaves simply cleave more to their particular cultural worlds.

And of course diversity needs to be looked at over time, so that new encounters and new trade may over time help to produce new cultural goods. Perhaps we are so fixated on the preservation of the past because we cannot imagine the new diversities of the future? Yet the human cycle must include death, loss, even extinction: of languages, groups, ways of life. The struggle to preserve must be balanced by the struggle to create, to be born anew.

A different opposite of division is multiplication. Every difference, diversity, is a creative addition, not so much a “third space” which is still based on division, but multiplicity. The generative nature of difference lies behind all identities, so everything is always-already in-between, intermezzo. Identity is the freezing of this process, usually for some kind of political purpose.

There are some interesting contradictions in media and cultural policy, that speak to the issues of difference and fragmentation mentioned before. Many of our policy initiatives drive toward increasing the number of channels and extending the range of voices. Yet how can we support diversity without that leading to division, without being aware of the

potential dangers of the latter? Sometimes it seems as if, for example, the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and the desire to preserve “endangered languages” are less concerned to protect the endangered people who speak these languages than the cultural expression in and of itself. Yet if culture is a practice, and some people change or abandon their practice, for whom and for what purpose does the desire to ‘protect’ appear?

Similarly, support for more minority and diasporic media and a multiplicity of voices does not easily translate into a “shared culture” and can run the risk of fragmentation without integration, of difference turning into division.

Here we might rethink our attitude toward the state and its role, especially in fragile polities and economics. If strong states are seen as possible bulwarks against neo-liberal economic marketization, then we might also have to rethink attitudes toward human rights or, at least, about pressing human rights as the first and fundamental priority of weak, post-conflict states. Afghanistan now has 15 television channels, each war lord having his own outlet, but does this help Afghanistan build a sense of nationhood? The same question can be asked in Iraq, where ethnicised media outlets are growing at the expense of a voice of national unity. Rwanda, cautiously rebuilding after its trauma and concerned not to repeat the mistake of racialised discourses that helped mobilise the previous violence, responded harshly to a columnist who compared the president to Hitler. Immediately, Amnesty and HRW Watch rushed in to protest at rights violations. External agents seems to trump internal decision-making and policy concerns and to propose a different set of priorities that do not always take specific circumstances into account. I am not saying that we abandon concern about human rights or cultural rights. I am saying that the rapid organized responses of well-oiled agencies located in the West about these issues may not always be the most considered or appropriate for the conditions of the societies in question that are the recipients of the concern.

There’s a old phrase from Clyde Kluckhohn and Murray in 1948 that

Every man (*sic*) is like all other men; like some other men; like no other man

The “global” does invites us to think about “humanity”, as indeed “problems bigger than the nation” including global warming and disease invite us to think of global solutions. The three slides of blood types (Image 9, 10, 11) show what we share and how it is distributed, as does the image of the human genome and how much we share with mice.

We do live individual lives, not identical to anyone else, although some lives are more individualised and more individuated than others. It is the middle term that most confounds us: being “like some other men” which we are most usually asked to think about in terms of cultural, not material, distinctions and which are available to those who so wish to manipulate into politicised differences.

Conclusions: Media and Global Divides

To go back to where I started, it seems to me that the imputed cultural divisions in the world are often epiphenomena that are mobilised politically and cynically to create tensions that mask the real scandal of the current moment, the real material inequalities that “cultural differences” hide. Why is it a legitimate and overt political motive to “bring democracy” to other nations but not a legitimate and overt economic motive to deal with poverty? Why have international banks been more ready to lose billions

Image 9.

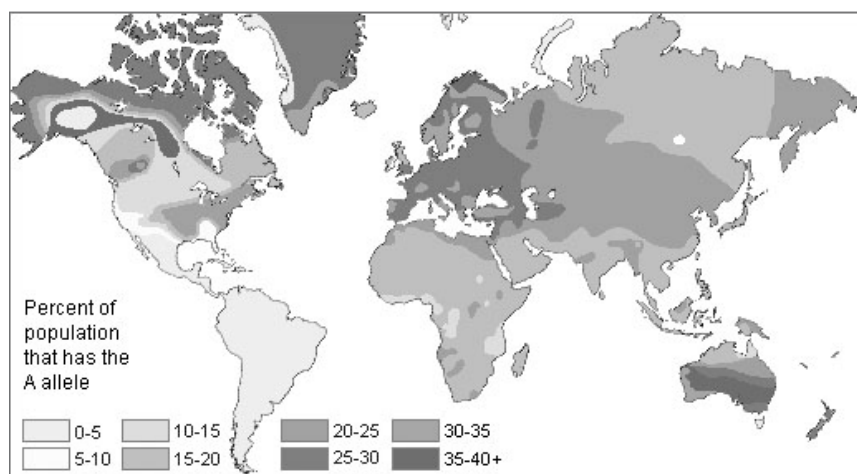


Image 10.

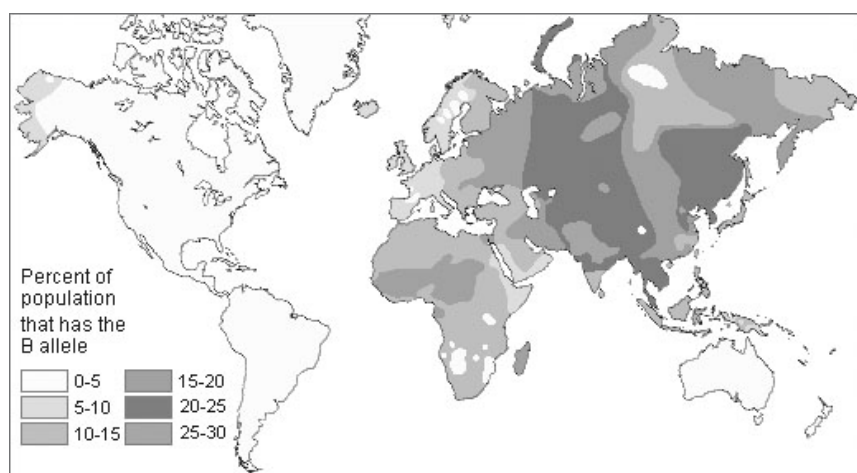
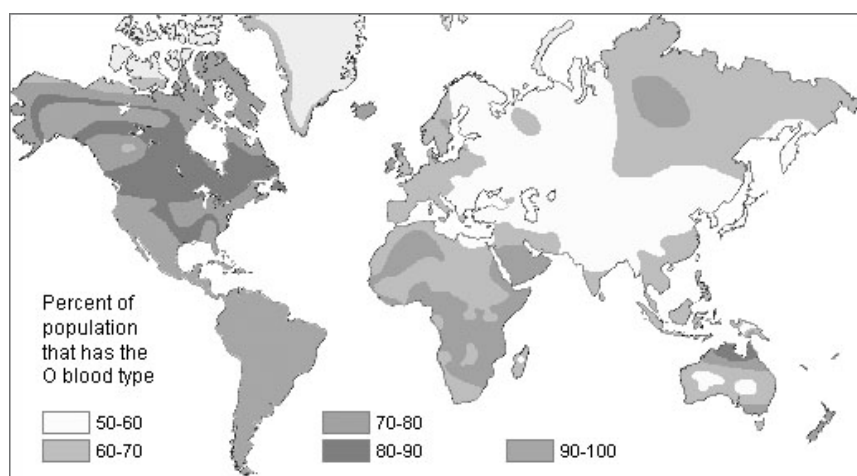


Image 11.



gambling in the ‘market’ than deliberate invest in development where it is necessary? This is the shame of our times.

Inequality is a far more significant concern than division/difference. As Schuurman (2001) suggests, “the very essence of development...is a normative preoccupation with the poor, marginalised and exploited people in the south. In this sense *inequality* rather than *diversity* or *difference* should be the main focus... inequality of access to power, to resources, to a human existence – in short, inequality of emancipation”. This is a concern about the on-going structural reproduction of inequality, not about the sudden explosion onto our screens of suffering in specific locales although that also requires a response. Indeed, one might say that *because* of its long-term, endemic qualities, the issue of poverty rarely make it onto television screens because it is not particularly newsworthy but merely things as they are. What is our own and our media’s responsibility, in an epoch of plenty, vis-à-vis those who do not have enough? Will it make a difference when we see suffering, not only at a “distance” but increasingly close at hand, in our neighbourhoods? Hurricane Katrina gave many Americans a profound shock. I wonder, as the economic downturn hits more people in the West, whether that triggers any sense of understanding of how much of the world ordinarily live their lives in even poorer conditions all the time?

The four Rs are common tropes in contemporary political and cultural analysis: *representation*; *rights*; *recognition*; *redistribution*. Our political and cultural trajectories lead from political citizenship to cultural citizenship; from political rights to cultural rights, but the most basic and crucial of all of them is redistribution, which also implies the return of the analysis of inequality and the reality of class. In terms of cultural difference, we want a hundred flowers to bloom. In that sense media might give us global multiplication of artistic and creative difference. It might also invoke, often out of ignorance and lack of independent analysis, the easy recourse to “friends” and “enemies”, to political division that contemporary discourse displays. In that sense, media carry the seeds of division.

But the real scandal, often far from view, is the slow reproduction of inequality – often highly gendered – that is not even deemed worthy of showing. Media are the veil of appearances; we need to remind ourselves and our students of the real divisions that stalk the world even if their geography is more complex now than before.

Image 12. Mandalas



I've included a couple of images of mandalas, (Image 12). This is a Sanskrit word, loosely translated to mean "circle". A mandala represents wholeness, and can be seen as a model for the organizational structure of life itself – a cosmic diagram that reminds us of our relation to the infinite, the world that extends both beyond and within our bodies and minds. It represents the "axis mundi" or world axis, as opposed to the "axis of evil" that supposedly threatened the West. Jung said that a mandala symbolizes "a safe refuge of inner reconciliation and wholeness... a synthesis of distinctive elements in a unified scheme representing the basic nature of existence." A mandala represents integration.

Tibetan Buddhists say that a mandala consists of five "excellencies":

- The teacher
- The message
- The audience
- The site
- The time

An audience or "viewer" is necessary to create a mandala. Where there is no you, there is no mandala (Longchenpa, 2001). Thank you for listening – and reading – and you decide whether there's been a mandala or not.

Notes

1. A loop of 36 maps played continuously through my talk. A few images are reproduced here.
2. Since writing this paper, the so-called global credit crunch – which is centrally located in North Atlantic financial systems – is rendering this forecasting more accurate.
3. Sale of Damian Hirst artworks in London in September 2008 netted a record-breaking £70.5 million.
4. Newly-elected President Obama has talked of altering the US position on climate change; we await the actions.
5. There have been some programmes talking across the grain: British television programmes on discrimination against Muslims, a two hour analysis of the Koran, a daily story about pilgrims going to Mecca on hajj; a Guardian on-line space for blogging the Koran.
6. The welcome overtures by President Obama to dialogue with Iran have by February 2009 not produced much interaction.

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